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Project Communication and Safety

Put effective project organization, management, communication, and safety practices in place to help ensure that your project is successful and safe.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion on this chapter, you should be able to:

- ☒ Describe the purpose of project documentation
- ☒ Describe the various types of recommended project communications
- ☒ Describe the role of communication as a tool to improve safety at a hot mix asphalt plant
- ☒ List things that can be done to improve plant safety

Project Communication

The most essential part of project planning and organization is communication. Effective communication is vital to all elements of project organization:

- The project documents are written instructions that must describe the requirements clearly and in detail.
- The preconstruction conference initiates verbal communication between the representatives of the agency and contractor personnel; it sets the tone for both the working relationship and direct communications during project execution.
- Ongoing project communications between the Department, contractors, and contractor personnel to ensure projects yield high-quality work.
- Project records make it possible to track events should doing so become necessary.
- Safety on the job cannot be maintained if communication between parties is inadequate.



Project Documents

Project documents illustrate and describe work to be done under the contract. Project documents include:

- **Plans** – Drawings that show the location, character, dimensions, and details of the work to be done.
- **Standard Drawing** – Are used by the owner for common structures encountered in projects, i.e. drop inlets, guard rail and rumble strips encountered in most paving projects. Unless otherwise specified, applicable drawings in the Department's *Road and Bridge Standards* and such other standard drawings as are referred to on the plans.
- **Standard Specifications** – Directions, provisions, and requirements for performing the work illustrated and described in the plans. The items in the standard specifications relate to or illustrate the method and manner of performing the work or describe the qualities and quantities of materials and labor to be furnished under the contract. The Department's *Road and Bridge Specifications* are the standard specifications for VDOT projects.



- **Special or Supplemental Specifications** – Approved additions and revisions to the standard specifications.
- **Special Provisions** – A document that sets forth specifications or requirements for a particular project that is not covered by the standard Specification.
- **Special Provision Copied Note**—A document that sets forth specific specifications or requirements usually limited in scope, for a particular project.

If there is a discrepancy between the instructions and specifications in any of the contract documents, a definite hierarchy exists among the above major types of documents. The order of priority as defined by VDOT's *Road and Bridge Specifications*, from highest to lowest is:

- Special provision copied note
- Special provisions
- Plans
- Supplemental specifications
- Standard specifications
- Standard drawings

This order of priority corresponds to the specific applicability of the document to a project or contract.

AWARENESS/IMPORTANT



Make sure you are aware of the VDOT Strategic Plan, Agency Values and their Safety KPI metrics per year when building your plan.

<http://vaperforms.virginia.gov/agencylevel/stratplan/spReport.cfm?AgencyCode=501>

Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure.
May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.

Plans and specifications need to be accurate and complete and should leave little room for assumptions or later reinterpretation. In addition, plans and specifications need to define the responsibilities of both the Department and the contractor.

Types of Communication

The quality of the work completed and the safety of those performing and inspecting the construction are directly related to the quality of the communication between the Department and the contractor.

It is important that the individuals in daily charge of the project for both the Department and the contractor meet periodically, on both a formal and an informal basis, to discuss the progress and quality of the work done to date and the schedule for future work.



The table that follows highlights types of communication that should be employed.

Preconstruction Conference	<p>The preconstruction conference should be held before work on a project begins. The meeting should bring agreement on the proposed schedule, methods to be used to complete the project on schedule with a minimum of delays and change orders, material sources, plant production rates, etc. Additionally, the role of each person associated with the project should be discussed and clarified. One of the most important items to be addressed at the preconstruction conference is job safety.</p> <p>One technique is to ask each person to discuss ways they can keep their activities at the plant safe for others and work out a plan that is effective for everyone.</p>
Formal Meetings	<p>Key personnel from both the Department and the contractor should be present at these meetings. The meetings should discuss: the quantity of work completed, test results obtained, what has yet to be accomplished, the schedule for the coming weeks, and changes in personnel, equipment, construction methods used and mix design. Written minutes, including a list of those in attendance, should be completed and distributed as quickly as possible.</p>

**Informal Meetings and
Information Sharing**

Daily informal meetings at the asphalt plant provide a forum for the exchange of information. The purpose of informal meetings is twofold. First, occurrences the day before such as work completed, test results, and any problem areas, should be discussed and resolved. Second, the discussion should address what is expected to happen during the next several days – an update on the information exchanged at the last formal meeting.

In addition, other tools and techniques can be used to share information and improve safety. For example, a common CB radio in the loader and one in each of the trucks can help eliminate conflict. Another technique is to keep a daily plant log or diary to share any potential problems or conditions with each other.

**Written
Communication**

Much information can be communicated in oral form, but discussion of important information should be followed up in written form, particularly when conditions on the project change substantially.

If an occurrence is important enough to be remembered later on, it is important enough to be written down immediately after it happens so the information will be accurate and complete.

Project Safety

Numerous dangers exist around an asphalt plant. Electrical shock injury is all too common, as are injuries from falls, accidents, and burns from hot asphalt.

Communication is a key safety issue at any hot mix asphalt facility. Develop and distribute clear-cut guidelines dealing with your organization's policy on safety. Every individual involved in the project should know what is expected and how to perform the assigned tasks. Proper training in the operation of a piece of equipment is essential for its operators, for example. Retraining is necessary at frequent intervals because the longer a person continues to perform the same task, day after day, the more likely he or she is to do things by habit and ignore surrounding events. In addition, all personnel must be aware of OSHA guidelines, including the wearing of hard hats, safety glasses, and gloves.

Safety talks are a good way to start the day. People need to be reminded that they are operating in a potentially dangerous environment, and daily talks are one way of meeting this need.

Further, if an unsafe work practice is noticed, corrective action should be taken immediately. Don't let production issues result in a disregard for safety.

Throughout the guide, we have highlighted safety practices and warnings that relate to the topic or process mentioned, using the icon symbol shown below.



SAFETY WARNING



Describes a condition where personal safety may be at risk. This is used to alert personnel to operating procedures & practices which, if not observed, may result in personal injury.

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